

Message Text

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41

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-05 AID-05 SCCT-01 OPR-02 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

IO-10 OMB-01 A-01 USSS-00 /075 W

----- 008204

Z 011159Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK FLASH

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4186

INFO CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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BANGKOK FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

HONG KONG FOR RMO

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LA, US

SUBJ: REVIEW OF SITUATION WITH PHOUMI VONGVICHIT

1. AT MY REQUEST I CALLED ON FONMIN PHOUMI VONGVICHIT AT 4:30 P.M., JUNE 1, IN ORDER, AS I EXPLAINED TO HIM, TO REVIEW THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR RELATIONS PRIOR TO MR. HABIB'S VISIT; TO INDICATE TO HIM QUITE FRANKLY THE PROBLEMS THAT WE WERE CONFRONTING; TO ASCERTAIN THAT MR. HABIB'S VISIT WOULD NOT CREATE AN INCIDENT THAT WOULD BE EMBARRASSING TO OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS; AND TO SEE WHETHER WE COULD NOT RESOLVE LAST NIGHT'S PETTY INCIDENT INVOLVING A MARINE.

2. LIKE A BROKEN RECORD I WENT OVER OUR EFFORTS TO HELP THE GOVERNMENT STABILIZE THE SITUATION AND TRY TO
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FIND A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY WAY OF PROCEEDING. HOW-

EVER, WITH THE SAME FRANKNESS THAT HE HAS ALWAYS INVITED, I HAD TO SAY THAT WE FOUND THE SITUATION CONFUSING AND TENSE. AT THE USAID COMPOUND THERE WAS A COMMITTEE OF PROTESTORS WHO BORROWED JEEPS, TYPEWRITERS, WHO WERE ARMED, WHO HAD ASKED TO BE PAID FOR THEIR GUARD SERVICES. THEY SEEMED TO DOMINATE THE COMPOUND AND WE DID NOT SEEM TO FIND ANY POLICE OFFICER WHO HAD SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY TO DEAL WITH US. THERE WERE ALSO INNUMERABLE THEFTS OF HOUSES WHICH WE VACATED. ALL THIS CREATED A CLIMATE OF INSECURITY THAT EXPLAINED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, LAST NIGHT'S INCIDENT. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, I HAD TO ASK HIM WHETHER HE WAS SURE THAT MR. HABIB'S VISIT WOULD NOT OCCASION AN EMBARRASSING INCIDENT.

3. THE CONVERSATION EVOLVED IN A VERY DISJOINTED AND ELUSIVE MANNER. NEVERTHELESS, PHOUMI FIRST TOOK UP THE QUESTION OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S VISIT SAYING " I HAVE DIRECTED THE MIXED POLICE TO INSURE HIS SECURITY AND I DO NOT THINK THERE WILL BE AN INCIDENT." HE SEEMED SATISFIED AT THE MANNER THINGS WERE PROGRESSING. HE INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN CONTROLLING THE SITUATION. HE SAID THAT JUST THIS MORNING THE MILITARY POLICE HAD SEIZED THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR BECAUSE THEY NO LONGER WANTED TO BE MILITARY BUT WANTED TO BE PART OF THE INTEGRATED POLICE. HE KNEW OF THEFTS AND SAID THAT WE SHOULD DEAL WITH THE MIXED POLICE OR THE JOINT CENTRAL COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT (JCCIA). I SAID THAT WE VERY MUCH WANTED TO WORK WITH THE POLICE BUT IT WAS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO FIND SOMEONE OF SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY. HE SAID THAT WE SHOULD DEAL WITH MR. PRADITH OF THE JCCIA, OR COLONELS PONGSAY AND PHAO OF THE MIXED POLICE.

4. HE REPEATED AT LEAST THREE TIMES THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT ENVISAGED RAPID NEGOTIATIONS ON TERMINATION OF USAID AND RAPID RENEGOTIATIONS OF A NEW AID AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR EXPERTS AND INDEED GREATER ASSISTANCE. ONCE ALL THIS WAS COMPLETED, AN ENTIRELY NEW CLIMATE WOULD BE CREATED BETWEEN US. (WHAT IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STARTLING WHENEVER PHOUMI DISCUSSES NEW AID ON A NEW BASIS IS HIS APPARENT COMPLETE ASSURANCE THAT SUCH AID WILL BE FORTHCOMING.)

5. FINALLY, I PROBED FOR AN IMMEDIATE AND FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT OF SGT. LELAND'S CASE. ACCORDING TO PHOUMI, HIS CHEF DE CABINET SOUBANH HAD TOLD HIM THAT THREE AMERICANS HAD BEATEN UP A STUDENT WHO HAD FAINTED.

I APPEARED AMAZED AND WENT OVER THE WHOLE THING IN DETAIL. I EMPHASIZED THAT THE SERGEANT HAD AFFIRMED HE HAD STRUCK NO ONE; THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO INJURIES; THAT IT WAS REALLY A PETTY STREET INCIDENT THAT SHOULD NOT OCCUPY THE MINISTER AND MR. HABIB WHO SHOULD BE TALKING ABOUT MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS. AT THE END HE INDICATED THAT IF THE "STUDENT" DID NOT LODGE A COMPLAINT, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A FRIENDLY SOLUTION.

6. COMMENT: PHOUMI WAS AT HIS MOST ELUSIVE SELF, EXCEPT FOR ASSURANCE IN EFFECT THAT THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S VISIT WOULD GO WITHOUT INCIDENT AND FOR HIS DESIRE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH NEGOTIATIONS ON AID. I DID NOT ASK TO SEE PRIMIN SOUVANNA BECAUSE IT WAS COUNTRY TEAM'S JUDGMENT THAT SOUVANNA MIGHT WELL RESENT THE QUESTION OF MR. HABIB'S VISIT BEING RAISED AND THAT IN ANY CASE HE IS IN NO POSITION TO PROVIDE ANY ASSURANCES.

7. 1820 HOURS: SOUBANH JUST CALLED TO SAY THAT A DECISION HAD BEEN MADE TO CANCEL THE POLICE INQUIRY, BUT THAT SGT. LELAND SHOULD LEAVE THE COUNTRY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I THANKED HIM VERY MUCH AND SAID HE WOULD LEAVE TOMORROW. ONE SMALL PROBLEM SOLVED; ONE GIANT LEAP FORWARD. TO THIS WE HAVE COME.
CHAPMAN

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